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New York

Chairman: Mr. Sychou ..... (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 60 to 81 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka): On behalf of the Sri Lanka delegation and on my own behalf, allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your unanimous election. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation in your fulfilment of the responsibilities entrusted to you as Chairman. I should also like to pay tribute on behalf of my delegation to your distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun, who steered the Committee with great skill during the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Since our gathering last year, many important developments have taken place on the world scene. During this period some long-standing issues of international significance have been resolved. Meanwhile, other political and security issues have emerged, throwing up new challenges at national, regional and global levels. Members of the international community have the responsibility for meeting these new challenges effectively and expeditiously, as only their resolute action will determine the nature of the legacy that future generations will inherit.

The past year has had its own achievements. Significant among them was the completion of negotiations and the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Its path, however, has been tortuous: that fact needs no elaboration. The finale to this process witnessed unprecedented steps being taken in the field of law-making by nations. Leaving a broad margin for the shortcomings of the CTBT with regard to its lack of a clear commitment to nuclear disarmament and to the elimination of all nuclear weapons within a definitive time-frame, as demanded by the Non-Aligned countries, and despite limitations in the scope of the Treaty, we must admit that, with as many as 123 signatures, the collective efforts of the international community since the late 1950s have eventually borne fruit.

Despite the justifiable euphoria, Sri Lanka is concerned that the unconventional stipulation contained in article XIV could delay the entry into force of the Treaty. While we hope that the States parties to the Treaty will find a way to overcome this hurdle in keeping with international law and custom, Sri Lanka hopes that the nuclear-weapon States will abide by the spirit of the Treaty and refrain from conducting underground nuclear-test explosions pending the Treaty's entry into force.

While considering the subject of entry into force of international instruments, we regret the fact that the Chemical Weapons Convention, signed with a fanfare three years ago, is about to enter into force without having been ratified by the two countries possessing the biggest arsenals of chemical weapons on Earth. Sri Lanka expresses the hope that both the Russian Federation and the United States of America will ratify the Convention, and the Preparatory Commission complete its work, as soon as possible.

It has been nearly one and a half years since the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was extended indefinitely. A declaration of Principles and

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Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, known as Decision 2, was adopted by the NPT Review and Extension Conference affirming

> "the need to continue to move with determination towards the full realization and effective implementation of the provisions of the Treaty" *(NPT/CONF.1995/L.5)*

and covering the nuclear spectrum almost in its entirety.

The Preparatory Committee scheduled for spring 1997 will be responsible for assessing, *inter alia*, to what extent and, more importantly, how well the principles and objectives set out in Decision 2 have been honoured by the States parties, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, and what further measures are required to promote the full implementation of the Treaty. A quarter of a century after coming into force, the Treaty still lacks universality. While Sri Lanka calls upon the States that are still outside the Treaty to enter the NPT fold, the States parties also have a responsibility to examine ways and means of attracting these remaining States to the Treaty.

One of the most important objectives of Decision 2 was nuclear disarmament. In this regard it is important to recall the fact that the nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their commitment made in 1968 to pursue in good faith negotiations on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament. The time has now come for these States to translate their words into deeds.

Sri Lanka is fully aware of the importance of next year's Preparatory Committee to the NPT Review Conference scheduled for the year 2000. With this in view, my delegation, in its capacity as the country that provided the President of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, intends shortly to convene a meeting of the States parties to the Treaty, with a view to agreeing on a procedural draft resolution to be placed before the current General Assembly calling upon the Secretary-General to provide such assistance as may be required to hold such a Preparatory Committee in 1997.

Because of its importance and timeliness, the subject of nuclear disarmament consumed a considerable amount of the time of the Conference on Disarmament during its 1996 session, in the context of both the CTBT and the Conference agenda. This issue is bound to be taken up in the Conference on Disarmament once again in 1997. Sri Lanka expresses the hope that the First Committee will examine the question in depth and provide guidance on how the Conference on Disarmament should best address this issue in 1997.

In addition to the strong appeal made by the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement at Cartagena, we can also be guided in this regard by the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, delivered in response to the question initiated by the World Health Organization with regard to the legality or otherwise of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

For its part, the Group of 21, which represents nearly half of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament, called early this year for the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on Nuclear Disarmament. With the CTBT, which consumed a major part of the Conference's time, behind us, the General Assembly could request the Conference to devote part of its time to this important subject in 1997. Given the successful conclusion of the NPT Review and Extension Conference last year, and the signing of the CTBT this year, Sri Lanka believes that the stage is now set for the next phase of our work: to begin work on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament with the objective of complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. In this regard, Sri Lanka wishes to request all delegations carefully to study the proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons, submitted on 7 August by 28 members of the 61-member Conference on Disarmament.

Security assurances, both negative and positive, by the nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States have, since the mid-1960s, been a subject of intense debate in the context of the NPT. Regrettably that demand, which could not be resolved in 1968, has failed to be satisfactorily addressed even after 25 years. The intense debate that preceded the Review and Extension Conference, and the views expressed during the Conference by the non-nuclear-weapon States, have made it abundantly clear that Security Council resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995) failed to address the issue satisfactorily. It was against that background that Decision 2 of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference concluded that

> "further steps should be considered to assure non-nuclear-weapon States party to the Treaty against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons." (*ibid., para. 8*)

While some nuclear-weapon States, such as China and the Russian Federation, are favourably disposed towards an internationally negotiated, legally binding instrument, the

other nuclear-weapon States have so far balked at the demand of the non-nuclear-weapon States for such an instrument. However, it has been noted that the nuclear-weapon States have agreed to provide clear-cut security assurances to certain States on a selective basis. While such measures can be welcomed as positive developments, members of the Non-Aligned Movement have concluded that the unilateral declarations and Security Council resolution 984 (1995) constituted only the beginning of a process providing for security assurances to which they, as non-nuclear-weapon States, were entitled. Hence their demand within the Conference on Disarmament, the First Committee and elsewhere for an internationally negotiated, legally binding instrument obligating all nuclear-weapon States to provide an uniform guarantee. Sri Lanka hopes that concrete steps will be taken in the Conference on Disarmament in 1997 for negotiating a legally binding international instrument providing security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

It was only during the second half of the twentieth century that human beings were able to escape the gravitational pull of planet Earth and venture into the hitherto unexplored outer space. However, the intense competition and enmity between the two super-Powers at that time almost turned outer space into a futuristic battlefield. Fortunately, that rivalry has now been overtaken by a spirit of cooperation, which we all welcome.

One school of thought advocates the idea that there is no need to continue work to prevent an arms race in outer space in the absence of an arms race in that domain. That there is no arms race in outer space today is an incontrovertible fact. No one, however, would deny the fact that plans to militarize outer space existed not very long ago. It is fortunate that the international climate has changed for the better. What if the situation had worsened? Another school of thought believes that agreeing upon confidence-building measures is all that is needed for the present. We have no difficulties with confidence-building. However, we should ask ourselves whether we should not be a little more ambitious. Could we not use the present positive climate effectively to do all that we can, in case the situation takes a turn for the worse again? If the term "arms race" is irrelevant in today's context, we could agree upon an appropriate term to describe our work, such as the "prevention of the militarization of outer space".

Some delegations were not happy with the proposal to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Outer Space in the Conference on Disarmament in 1996, as the Conference had a more important task to perform. As the CTBT is happily behind us now, we should ask the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee in 1997 with a negotiating mandate, so that the Conference can deal with the matter effectively.

I must direct the attention of this Committee to a global problem that stalks practically every State in the world today. It is a vicious circle that has dangerous synergies involving illegal drug peddling, money laundering and illicit arms transfers. These feed international terrorism, which has emerged as public enemy number one — the worst destabilizing factor as this century draws to a close. Massive quantities of conventional weapons released in the wake of the end of the cold war are reaching the illicit arms market and creating serious security problems for States, particularly small and vulnerable ones. My country is one such victim. It must not only meet the military threat of an organization that fattens itself with funds extracted from Sri Lankan asylum-seekers living mainly in Western Europe, North America and several other asylum-granting countries, but also look after the welfare of the tens of thousands of civilians displaced internally as a result of terrorism, at a colossal social and financial burden to the country.

In his address to the General Assembly at its current session, the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka clearly stated that the response to threats of this nature must be global and concerted, as no country acting alone can defend itself against terrorism. Small States such as mine are most vulnerable in this respect. The growing awareness of the problem of terrorism has manifested itself in the recent initiatives taken by the Group of Seven and the Russian Federation at Lyon and at the ministerial meeting on terrorism in Paris. It has become an urgent necessity to forge an international covenant to combat terrorism, which should simultaneously address its relationship to drug peddling, money laundering and illicit arms transfers. There should be thorough observation of and respect for the principle that no territory of a country shall be permitted to be used by terrorist groups to collect funds, purchase weapons and explosives with intent to wage war and carry out subversive propaganda against another country. In an endeavour to combat international terrorism, arrangements must be forged not only globally, but also regionally, subregionally and, where possible, bilaterally.

As I said to the Assembly during my statement last year, the establishment of a Zone of Peace in the Indian Ocean has remained a major objective of our foreign policy. The proposal was first introduced at the United Nations in 1972 by the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike. In the quarter century since the introduction of the proposal, the world has been overtaken by a sea change in inter-State relations. Rivalry between the great Powers and the cold war are things of the past. They have been replaced by a new era of mutual trust, confidence and cooperation, and new frontiers in international relations have been established, which have also generated renewed interest in the Indian Ocean. These include the Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Cooperation and the Indian Ocean rim initiative. We must ask ourselves whether we should not make use of the current propitious international climate and forge ahead with arrangements to ensure continued peace and security in this strategically important region.

I wish to refer briefly to the United Nations regional centres for disarmament and peace in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Sri Lanka attaches importance to activities conducted by these regional centres, in its belief that they contribute positively and substantially to the progress of the regions in their respective spheres of human endeavour. Of particular importance is the need to buttress these regional centres financially. Dwindling financial resources prejudice their progress and rob them of their vitality. Sri Lanka, therefore, can only appeal for substantial financial succour to ensure the survival of these centres in this era of disarmament, peacemaking, peace-building and development. Sri Lanka is pleased to note the activities conducted by the Kathmandu Centre and wishes to urge the countries of the region and those outside it to continue their financial assistance to make the Centre a robust one.

With the fundamental changes in the global scene since the beginning of the final decade of the twentieth century, we have to re-examine the validity of the Conference on Disarmament's agenda. The disarmament "Decalogue" is no longer relevant or valid in its entirety. It therefore calls for revision. The Conference on Disarmament's own response to the new challenges has been positive. A Special Coordinator on the Conference's agenda and future programme of work has remained seized of the matter for some time. Although a full consensus could not be reached, there are growing signs of greater understanding on this score. Given the limited resources available to the Conference, we have to be practical enough to avoid biting off more than we can chew. We would do well to identify the issues and prioritize them with a view to doing full justice to a limited number of items within the span of 24 weeks available to us in a given year. It may be prudent for the Conference to consider the desirability of dividing its agenda into two broad areas: nuclear and conventional arms.

The sheer devastation that anti-personnel landmines cause to combatants as well as to non-combatants, both during and after hostilities, and their social and economic consequences have encouraged nations to consider ways and means of controlling such inhumane weapons. If the international community is determined to eliminate this scourge, then it must address all the issues concerned such as the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of such weapons by both State and non-State actors.

Finally, I must stress the importance of the role of non-governmental organizations in the mobilization of public opinion, dissemination of scientific and technical information on disarmament and related issues, which are invaluable to our Committee and the Conference on Disarmament.

We must give all possible support and encouragement to such organizations, both national and international, for they can supplement the many aspects of our work that would otherwise be lost for want of time and financial resources on the part of individual Governments and their representatives.

Mr. Diaz-Pereira (Paraguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): May I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Paraguay on your election as Chairman of the First Committee, and ask you also to extend congratulations to the members of the Bureau. Please accept our assurances of full cooperation.

At the start of our Committee's work, we must be aware that we will need a sound dose of judgement and goodwill so that once we have concluded our work, we can see the fruitful results of our efforts to ensure the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and disarmament in general.

We have heard it said that the pace of the process leading to complete nuclear disarmament must be stepped up to match the speed we reached during the arms race. In this regard, my country notes with hopeful optimism that in a very short period of time humankind has taken giant steps toward that goal.

In fact in less than one year, the long and hard road that we have travelled since 1954 has been marked by formidable achievements, among which we may mention, firstly, the conclusion of the Bangkok Treaty and the Cairo

Declaration of 11 April 1996, known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, which formally established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa.

These multilateral instruments are to be added to those already in existence, such as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, to which — following the accession of Guyana on 6 May 1996 — 31 States of Latin America and the Caribbean are party, and the Treaty of Rarotonga, which declares the South Pacific a nuclear-weapon-free zone and whose Protocols have now been signed by the United States of America, France and the United Kingdom.

The adoption by the General Assembly on 10 September this year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was opened for signature on 24 September and has already been signed by the nuclear Powers as well as by the majority of Member States of the United Nations, including Paraguay, is proof of the firm steps taken towards eliminating the terrible threat of the use of nuclear weapons that still looms over the human race.

Another important contribution has been the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice rendered on 8 July this year in response to a request by the United Nations General Assembly. That opinion, the result of an exhaustive and painstaking consideration of the matter, determines that both the threat and use of nuclear weapons would be considered unlawful since they would be in flagrant violation of the provisions of Article 2, paragraph 4 of the Charter of the United Nations, provided that the conditions for exercising the right of self-defence contained in Article 51 are not met.

Similarly, the members of the Court unanimously expressed the view that the threat or use of nuclear weapons should be compatible with the requirements of the principles and rules of international humanitarian law.

Because of its impeccable legal grounds, the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice lays down a doctrine of unquestionable moral force.

The delegation of Paraguay shares the satisfaction at these achievements, which raise our hopes that the coming century will be one of security and peace for all humankind. However, we should point out that they are not an end in themselves but stages on the way to the goal of complete disarmament.

In this connection, we fully share the views of the Canberra Commission, which stated:

> "The proposition that large numbers of nuclear weapons can be retained in perpetuity and never used, accidentally or by decision, defies credibility ... The only complete defence against such catastrophe is the elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again'. *(Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, Report, Part One)*

Given its commitment to this great undertaking of general disarmament, and nuclear disarmament in particular, our country will be one of the sponsors of the draft resolution of Brazil, which declares that the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and the Antarctic are helping gradually to turn the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas into a vast nuclear-weapon-free space.

Furthermore, the draft resolution, to achieve this goal, urges ratification of the instruments mentioned by all States that have not yet done so, as well as the conclusion of identical multilateral treaties in areas of tension such as the Middle East.

However, there are still some outstanding issues, such as accession of major countries to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), whose indefinite extension was decided on in 1995, and the negotiation and conclusion of a universal, verifiable and non-discriminatory multilateral treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices.

It is gratifying to note the efforts being made to build a reliable system to guarantee international peace and security which at some time may allow us to divert funds released by the end of the arms race towards activities providing food, better education, better health care and better well-being to millions of human beings who today live in the most abject poverty.

We are fully aware of the value of the work aimed at confidence-building among States. In that regard, we attach great importance to transparency in conventional weapons. That is why we consider that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a valuable mechanism to which our country periodically provides information on its transfers, procurement and stock of military material.

Paraguay is a party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and is fully aware of the dangerous effects of their use, as

we have seen in recent events. Pending its entry into force, we join those delegations that have voiced their concern and encouraged its prompt ratification by countries that have not yet done so.

We welcomed the amendment to Protocol II on anti-personnel landmines and the adoption of Protocol IV banning the use and transfer of blinding laser weapons, both in the framework of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

Our country applauds those States that produce and export landmines and have called for a voluntary and unilateral moratorium.

With regard to demining, our delegation wishes to pay a tribute of recognition and gratitude to those self-sacrificing men who, endangering their own persons, are today engaged in this very dangerous task somewhere in the world, as well as the States that have been providing the resources needed to clear the landmines.

Despite these important events, the present task will be finished only when a total ban has been agreed on anti-personnel landmines, which cause so much pain and suffering to the civilian population in different parts of the world every day.

In conclusion, may I say that a long road still lies ahead of us and that any effort that the international community may make in the disarmament process in all its all aspects will allow future generations to enjoy the real peace and security so long awaited by humankind.

Mr. Holum (United States of America): The United States congratulates you on your assumption of the Chair, and pledges its cooperation in the important deliberations that lie ahead.

As recent events in this very building have confirmed, this is a time of unprecedented progress for international peace and disarmament. The cornerstone of the world's non-proliferation architecture has been made permanent and strengthened. A global convention to outlaw poison gas is poised to enter into force. We have reversed the nuclear arms race and stepped back from the nuclear precipice. And now we have erected a mighty international barrier against the further development and proliferation of nuclear weapons with an historic treaty to end nuclear explosive testing.

But a vast agenda still lies before us. Its leading elements were outlined here at the United Nations by President Clinton on 24 September 1996 — the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) in force, a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), further controls on nuclear arms, a stronger Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and safeguards, a more enforceable Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, and a worldwide ban on anti-personnel landmines.

Today we must address that agenda with particular care. For our great progress in recent years brings not only rewards but responsibilities, including a special responsibility now to seize all that is attainable in our quest for a safer world.

If every avenue ended at a brick wall, our descendants might forgive some measure of carelessness in deciding precisely how to beat our heads against it. But we are in an era of breakthroughs. That means we owe our best and most considered judgements on how to proceed, lest historic opportunities be lost.

So I would like to discuss here today what might seem a bureaucratic issue, but is in fact one that could decide whether disarmament will advance and accelerate, or stall in its tracks. The issue is, what venues — which of our institutions and structures — are best suited for advancing each element of the immense arms control agenda that remains?

The first item on the agenda is unfinished business — to bring the Chemical Weapons Convention into force.

In this case, the proper forum is in individual States and their ratification processes. Of the 65 States necessary to trigger the 180-day countdown toward entry into force, 64 have now deposited instruments of ratification. Regrettably, the United States is not among them. Last month the CWC was withdrawn from consideration in the United States Senate. But every nation here should know that our ratification effort will resume promptly in the next months, without political distractions.

The United States intends to be an original party to this Convention. As President Clinton said:

> "we will join the ranks of nations determined to prevent the spread of chemical weapons." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 6th meeting, p. 2)*

Meanwhile, we are actively destroying United States chemical weapon stockpiles.

The next major achievable step in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is a treaty to ban the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons. As with the test ban, this treaty deferred must not be a treaty denied.

The FMCT must become an urgent priority in the body now seized of it. Indeed, it is a perfect opportunity for the Conference on Disarmament to confirm once again its viability and effectiveness. That body's long experience, substantive expertise, and sound procedures should be put to use, not out to pasture.

Indeed, to negotiate the FMCT now would build on the Conference on Disarmament's achievements in 1992, in the CWC, and also in 1996, in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). For I submit that the Conference on Disarmament did not fail, but succeeded, in the CTBT negotiations. It drew every ounce of consensus available from its 61 members. It brought together all five of the nuclear-weapon States — all the countries most immediately affected by the Treaty — in agreement not only to the principle of a test ban, but on every word of a specific text, which all five have now signed.

The Conference on Disarmament's achievement has been validated by the overwhelming vote in favour of the CTBT at the fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and is being further consolidated by the 125 States that have already signed the Treaty, plus the one — Fiji — that has already deposited its instrument of ratification. The United States will spare no effort in seeking the CTBT's ratification and formal entry into force.

Lest any doubt linger about the Conference on Disarmament's performance, its value can be reconfirmed and underscored by action on the FMCT. A multilateral, effectively verifiable cut-off treaty will complement the CTBT's qualitative cap on nuclear weapons by capping, worldwide, the fissile material available for such weapons. It will cut off the life blood of arms races, old and new. International monitoring will extend to currently unsafeguarded production facilities.

Such a cut-off has been on the global disarmament agenda for many years. India's Prime Minister Nehru, for example, first called for it in 1954. And last year, of course, the NPT Review and Extension Conference called for:

> "The immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations." *(NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), Decision 2, para. 4 (b))*

To fulfil that assignment, the Conference on Disarmament must again break free of artificial linkages that in this case would hold even the beginning of formal FMCT negotiations hostage to other agendas, such as a preordained schedule for eliminating all nuclear weapons.

After our test ban experience, we should not have to belabour the argument that a strategy of linkage is a strategy of failure. Holding a useful, achievable step in abeyance to force pursuit of a far more sweeping and difficult objective is a good way to achieve neither.

The cause of international peace and disarmament and the Conference on Disarmament itself will both be stronger the sooner the Conference on Disarmament turns effectively to the task of elaborating a fissile material cut-off treaty.

To reject linkage, however, is not to deny relevance. The world's nuclear arsenals must keep shrinking. Again, the question is where and how to pursue that end. For the foreseeable future, the best answer is in bilateral negotiations — a judgment that finds support in both the record and nature of our institutions.

In recent years, there has been dramatic progress in nuclear reductions. Cuts under the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) are more than two years ahead of schedule. Both the United States and the Russian Federation have already reduced nuclear-delivery vehicles below the limits set for December 1999. These are real — not pie-in-the-sky — arms reductions: Weapons on the ground are literally being sliced to pieces. Nuclear disarmament, thought to be utopian for so many years, is now being practised in a major way in the real world.

Progress is not confined to the United States and the former Soviet Union. Acting unilaterally, France is in the process of eliminating its land-based nuclear-armed missiles. By the end of 1998, the United Kingdom will have only one nuclear-weapon system and that will carry nearly 60 per cent less explosive power than it did during the 1970s.

We are determined to see the elimination of nuclear weapons continue. President Clinton told the General Assembly last month that

> "When Russia ratifies START II, President Yeltsin and I are all ready to discuss the possibilities of further cuts, as well as limiting and monitoring nuclear warheads and materials. This will help make deep reductions irreversible". (*ibid., p. 2*)

Yet some propose moving strategic arms control efforts to a global forum. One proposal is that the Conference on Disarmament should now undertake negotiations to abolish the arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States.

Let me say, as a staunch friend of the Conference on Disarmament, that this would be an inappropriate forum taking up an unamenable subject. It is no act of friendship to elevate expectations for a forum far beyond its capacities. Climbing down from cold-war nuclear-weapon peaks has been an intricate process, involving careful bilateral trade-offs, specialized verification and a constantly shifting menu of sensitive national security calculations. There is simply no realistic prospect that the Conference on Disarmament could manage such an effort. Last year's Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT itself recognized the practical realities. The programme of action declares that the test ban and the fissile cut-off should be completed by the Conference on Disarmament, but it says that efforts to reduce nuclear weapons should be pursued by the nuclear-weapon States. Those are the right assignments.

Is it wrong to be impatient? Absolutely not, for we are working to take down weapons of terrible power and they deserve no indulgence. Is this the business only of the nuclear-weapon States? On the contrary, there is ample room for careful thought and constructive opinion about how disarmament should proceed and abundant opportunity for debate. Indeed, the five nuclear-weapon States have made themselves specifically answerable for their progress in the NPT Review Conferences and will surely be called to account elsewhere. All I ask is that we take great care to nurture our opportunities and grasp them as they arise and that we do not tie ourselves up in a forum that cannot work or a strategy that cannot succeed, but instead keep our eye on the prize and keep advancing steadily towards it.

The next priority President Clinton identified was strengthening the non-proliferation Treaty and its safeguards. In this respect, there is no real dispute about the proper forum, as, under the Treaty, established bodies exist with the requisite competence and motivation. Progress is being made in three vital areas. First, "Programme *93+2*" presents a rare opportunity to apply the lessons of Iraq, amplify the lessons of North Korea and give the International Atomic Energy Agency, in President Clinton's words,

> "a stronger role and sharper tools for conducting worldwide inspections" (*ibid., p. 2*)

We urge the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency to approve as soon as possible a protocol to give the Agency greater access to relevant information, sites and technologies, such as environmental sampling, to reinforce its ability to detect undeclared nuclear activities in States under comprehensive safeguards.

Secondly, universal adherence to the NPT is drawing ever closer. There have been 46 new members since the end of the cold war. Only seven countries still remain outside. Thirdly, NPT parties are already preparing for the 2000 NPT Review Conference process, which will begin in 1997 with the first Preparatory Committee meeting. The United States supports implementation of last year's NPT decisions. We are treating the Preparatory Committee meetings as both substantive and procedural and we will be working to ensure that both the Preparatory Committee process and the Treaty review are balanced and treat all aspects of the NPT with equal thoroughness. The Biological Weapons Convention is also being strengthened by its Parties, acting under the aegis of that Treaty.

In September 1994, a Special Conference of the States Parties to the Convention established an Ad Hoc Group, open to all Parties, to address, through a legally binding protocol, the lack of specific compliance measures in the Convention itself. This protocol will enable the Convention to exploit arms control advances, such as short-notice inspections, that have emerged since the Convention was signed in 1972. As the protocol is distinct from the Convention, the Convention's broad prohibitions will remain fully in force for all 139 States Parties, with no weakening of the international norm they represent.

After two years of discussion, the Ad Hoc Group has identified the basic framework for a compliance protocol and has agreed to intensify its work over the next 12 months. Last month, President Clinton called for completion by 1998, a goal shared by the European Union. This effort will succeed if it remains resolutely focused on the task at hand: preventing deadly diseases from being used as instruments of terror or war. We must come to

closure on measures to make clear that any would-be proliferator's actions will not go unnoticed or unanswered by the international community.

The international community will soon decide how to continue our ambitious strides to control and then eliminate the use of anti-personnel landmines. We classify as "weapons of mass destruction" weapons that can destroy whole cities. Landmines are routinely destroying the equivalent of whole cities, one person at a time, day in and day out. Years after a conflict is over, they lie in wait to kill and maim innocent civilians. A major step forward has been made in the past year with agreement being reached on an amended Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions of Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects to ban non-detectable and unmarked long-lived anti-personnel landmines. It will avert thousands of deaths and disabilities every year. We urge all countries to adhere to amended Protocol II.

Now our task is to negotiate as soon as possible a global ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. We are looking at a number of possible paths to such a treaty including — as the Secretary of State, Mr. Christopher, has said — the Conference on Disarmament. There are other possible venues and we are continuing to consult on this issue.

Whatever route is chosen, the United States is committed to a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. As we pursue it, we are also working hard to find alternatives for the circumstances in which such mines remain a military necessity so that we can end our reliance on them as soon as possible. That is a technical and economic challenge, but the human carnage wreaked by landmines every single day also makes it essential. As President Clinton said last month:

> "Our children deserve to walk the Earth in safety". (*ibid., p. 3*)

The United Nations has entered the second half-century of its work for disarmament, international security and peace, and it has become clear that our efforts in this half-century must be guided by the arc of our progress in the previous one. Look at the remarkable strides we have taken. A few short years ago the growth of nuclear arsenals seemed inexorable. Today, arsenals in the United States, Russia, France and the United Kingdom are shrinking. In previous decades, we seemed powerless to oppose those who would use poison gas or deadly organisms in war or acts of terror. Now, we are closing in on entry into force of a treaty banning chemical weapons and are giving teeth to one that bans biological weapons. A world that witnessed more than 2,000 nuclear explosions has brought an end to that era.

All this progress is far more than a prelude to the real work of disarmament — it is the real work of disarmament, as we dismantle weapons and lifts our sights to the next steps that we can take. Each of these steps, each of these strides, and others, were made by aiming not for chasm-spanning leaps, but for concrete, achievable steps, first to stem the tide, and then to turn it.

It may be tempting to think that all this has resulted from leverage; but disarmament does not occur on demand. Security, not leverage, yields progress. We should recall that some were wary of extending the NPT indefinitely because they thought that the nuclear-weapon States would afterwards lose interest in the test ban. Instead, we intensified our efforts. That happened because in arms control each forward step creates a new security reality, thereby changing security thinking and generating possibilities that were unimaginable before. The Chemical Weapons Convention, a permanent and stronger NPT, the intermediate-range nuclear force and START reductions, and the CTBT all combine to yield a clearer picture of a secure future in which further steps can confidently be pursued. At each step up the ladder we can see better and further, and so do more.

Last month, President Clinton declared at the General Assembly that the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban-Treaty

> "points us towards a century in which the roles and risks of nuclear weapons can be further reduced and ultimately eliminated" (*ibid., p. 1*)

Now we will decide, through the fateful choices we make on how to proceed, whether we will sustain our momentum or squander it. If we choose badly, we risk not only tomorrow's progress, but today's, for, as historian Edward Gibbon said,

> "All that is human must retrograde if it does not advance".

If we choose wisely and well, however, our next half-century of progress can be even greater than the last and future generations will celebrate towering victories in the cause of security, disarmament and peace.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Algeria is delighted to see you, Sir, presiding over the work of the First Committee. This enlightened choice of the General Assembly attests to the international community's recognition of the constructive role played by your country in all matters related to disarmament. It is also a tribute to your professional and personal qualifications. In warmly congratulating you and other members of the Bureau, I should also like to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, for his brilliant stewardship of the work of this Committee.

The changes that have affected the system of international relations in recent years offer a new framework for reflecting on how to strengthen, on a lasting basis, security and cooperation in the world through the development of a new model of international relations.

Indeed, the retreat of the logic of confrontation has opened the way for a form of international cooperation that has made it possible to achieve positive results in matters of disarmament. Given the magnitude of the efforts required to overcome political resistance, the achievements in this area are remarkable. The relaxation of tensions and the reduction of the threat to peace that followed can only be a source of satisfaction, even though the peace dividend does not benefit all people equally.

The annual debate in the First Committee on disarmament and international security issues has, over the years, become a reliable barometer of the international political climate and serves as a valuable indicator of future prospects, inasmuch as disarmament lies at the heart of problems of peace and international security. Strong in this conviction, Algeria has demonstrated its firm commitment to strengthening the process of general and complete disarmament through various initiatives, including its active participation in the elaboration of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, its accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), its signing on 30 April 1996 of a general safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and its ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

The fact that the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its first session on 24 January 1946 was aimed at eliminating atomic weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction from national arsenals is more than merely symbolic. Since that time, the definitive cessation of all nuclear-weapons tests in all environments and the renunciation of the development of new weapons systems have become objectives whose implementation is now within the reach of the international community. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which my country has signed, emerged from this willingness of States to put an end to the nuclear-arms race and to continue the process of nuclear disarmament.

Algeria, which made a responsible and constructive contribution to the elaboration of this Treaty, believes that it is a first stage in the opening of substantive negotiations on a process of nuclear disarmament that is global in scope and non-discriminatory in its effects. That is why my delegation calls for the need to examine in depth, at this session, the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons presented by the Group of 21 to the Conference on Disarmament. In that context, we believe that the cessation of the manufacture of fissile materials should be combined with the ban on nuclear-weapons tests and related measures to make the disarmament process genuine and to speed effective progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Today, the international community is more united than ever in its recognition of the fact that the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons is an objective of paramount importance. Its unanimity was reflected in the Advisory Opinion on the legality of the use or threat of nuclear weapons issued by the International Court of Justice, to which I would like to pay tribute for its breakthrough in setting standards for disarmament.

Through the responsible approach that has always been its hallmark, Algeria contributed to the efforts of African leaders that resulted in the adoption on 30 April of the Treaty of Pelindaba, through which the States members of the Organization of African Unity made Africa a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. This process should be encouraged and accompanied by similar efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, *inter alia*, in the Middle East, where Israel's nuclear potential poses grave threats to the peace and security of that region.

The Chemical Weapons Convention to which my country became the thirty-third State Party in August 1995, is assuredly an authentic and universal disarmament instrument. Nevertheless, its forthcoming entry into force without the United States and the Russian Federation will not only detract from the idea of the universality of this treaty, but worse still will weaken it considerably. This situation has led a number of delegations, including my own, to express concern over the future of the Convention

and the practical and political consequences arising from the non-accession of the United States and the Russian Federation.

Given the conviction that international security must be to everyone's benefit, it is only natural that the largest possible number of people will strive to establish the conditions for and lay the foundations of such security. The expansion of United Nations bodies with limited memberships, such as the Conference on Disarmament, is a common-sense necessity arising from the end of hostilities and the prevalence of decision-making by consensus and must take into account concerns for efficiency by adhering to reasonable size limits. My delegation has always supported the idea of expansion and welcomed the decision to open that body to 23 new member States last June. We hope that this will lead to an awareness of the need to revitalize that multilateral disarmament negotiating framework and we reiterate our attachment to the role, mandate and rules of that body.

On the subject of the Mediterranean, Algeria is resolved to work towards partnership and joint responsibility in the security and development of the Mediterranean region that will incorporate the requirements of peace and cooperation between the two North and South shores and make the region one of complementarity and prosperity, free from tension.

It was in this spirit that Algeria acceded to the Barcelona process, which in our view represents an important stage towards the advent of relations between Europe and the Mediterranean sustained by joint action aimed at making regional security and development indivisible. The draft resolution on the Mediterranean that is before this Committee will be drafted in that spirit and aim for the same objectives.

The initiatives of the non-aligned States within the Conference on Disarmament are aimed at developing and supporting the impetus of disarmament. This impetus, whose purpose is to embrace all the interrelated objectives of disarmament under the banner of effective security, should encompass a question that is of particular concern to a growing number of States: the illicit transfer of conventional weapons, which breeds and exacerbates such violent phenomena as terrorism. This issue, which my delegation considers to be neither minor nor secondary to the security and stability of many countries, requires the special attention of the international community and should be addressed effectively and urgently.

We are facing new challenges that call for timely responses. These challenges cannot be met with selective and partial responses. They should locate human beings at the centre of all common concerns so that every player in the international arena is made aware of the need for security that is global in nature, universal in scope and non-discriminatory in its effects and blessings.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.